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excerpt

CONSERVATION— CONSUMPTION

PRESERVING THE TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE VALUES

Donatella Fiorani
Giovanna Franco
Loughlin Kealy
Stefano Francesco Musso
Miguel Angel Calvo-Salve

Editors



European
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This book presents the papers written by 33 participants following the 6th Workshop on Conservation, organised by the Conservation Network of the European Association for Architectural Education in A Coruña, Galicia, Spain in 2017. All papers have been peer-reviewed. The Workshop was attended by 51 participants from the following countries: Czech Republic, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom

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AN 'EXPERIENTIAL JOURNEY' BETWEEN THE MATERIAL AND IMMATERIAL VALUES OF A TERRITORY. IS THERE STILL AN ALTERNATIVE TO TRIVIALISED TOURISM?

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Only alone, lost, mute, on foot, can I recognise things¹

Introduction

It is more and more usual to hear about people who have walked the Camino de Santiago. Many talk about the difficulty of the trail, the effort, the desire to go back on the road, the feeling of spiritual accomplishment upon reaching the destination, in addition to the physical benefit from the undertaking. Others emphasise the many people they met along the way; the welcoming nature of the hospitality system, articulated throughout the trail, comfortable and safe; the courteous personnel, the quality of the services, etc. Some remember features of the landscape, interpreted as unusual², or rather, 'original', because they were unknown and not commonly a part of the familiar landscape. People rarely talk about the architecture along the trail or in the surrounding areas, including that of a religious nature, where payment may be required for access³ (Brilli 2006).

Travel articles from recent years have been primarily written by organised religious groups. Narrations of personal experiences are shared via multimedia publishing platforms where the main role is played by the images and the ability to tell a moving story. The actual experience is described as unexpected in respect to the experience imagined before departing, based on reading guidebooks.

The reasons that inspire people to begin the path are diverse. There are relatively few people who are pilgrims with strictly religious motivation: many are driven by spiritual desires⁴, the need to find themselves, to reflect, to abandon the daily grind, to test themselves with a physically and mentally challenging goal. Many people are attracted by a fascination with the trail (which has now become 'trendy') instilled over its history, by the artistic signs and marks left by people who have walked along the road (Fig. 1), while others want to commune with nature in a broader sense, rediscovering the essential nature of being alive.

Therefore, the term 'Camino de Santiago' does not only refer to the physical road that travels to the city of Galicia, but also to a personal voyage with a spiritual character. Crossing through a physical, tangible, real space, the steps of thousands of people have generated a symbolic environment, laced with profound echoes and beckoning.

The concrete manifestation of the walk, made of roads, stopping areas and signs, was shaped by a Christian view of the world. This vision has contributed to the structure of the environment, which then in turn reinforces the religious framework.

Today, the space that can be defined as a 'human landscape'. In the European Landscape Convention, this means a 'landscape' an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors (Council of



Europe 2000). In phenomenological terms, landscape is a form of 'being in the world'; by experiencing and living in the landscape it "becomes a part of us, just as we are a part of it" (Ingold 2000: 191). Any discipline concerning landscapes is therefore inevitably bound to acknowledge the importance of public perception and integrate it in their actions. In our case, the landscape, stimulated by new forms of pilgrimage, caters for human-environment interaction, inserting and integrating new symbolic meanings that have gone beyond a necessarily Christian reference.

The awareness and gratification that comes from experiencing the 'human landscape' is at risk. In fact, alarm has been raised about the danger of losing this spiritually, humane, positive potential, due to a series of factors⁵. There has been an increase in the number of people traveling the Camino with practical demands (not necessarily linked to physical health issues as much as lacking the ability to adapt to the difficulty of the trail, or those with expectations of a vacation experience), all of which pander to globalising answers. These demands generate wealth and stability for those who answer them, and are not opposed by the people who care for these places,

despite the fact that they necessarily require the transformation of the signs and spaces left from the original element purpose⁶ (Fig. 2).

A similar risk, with the same consequent preoccupation, is also shared by places that are travel destinations for a high number of people attracted by unique environmental, historical, artistic, spiritual, and natural features, which risk losing their reason for existence and/or identity to false pseudo environments created to imitate the original.

Pilgrimage, religious and/or cultural tourism, tourism

For a long time, people who made the journey to Santiago were pilgrims. This fact is described in numerous texts, and the historical presence of the pilgrim is necessary to the significance and enhancement of the trail. Travel diaries, from the first writings to more modern texts, contribute to understanding the reasoning behind the departure, and the specific objects of interest, both material and immaterial. The extended time commitment necessary for a pilgrimage, something that is difficult to contemplate in this day and age⁷, contributed to the evolution of the figure of the pilgrim into that of the religious or cultural tourist in recent times. The secularisation of human society also placed the cultural tourist alongside the regular tourist in a broad sense, curious about the motivations that led to the creation of specific behaviors, or simply with the desire to take a vacation.

Insofar as the pilgrimage and the journey of the tourist have the same structure (both are composed of a departure, arrival and return not always in the same ways and often, for the Camino, people often return home but not walking) there are nevertheless substantial differences between the two.

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FIG. 1. The symbols of the way.

FIG. 2. Transformation of agricultural buildings in tourist places.



Before continuing, it is important to clarify certain definitions. The tourist is a traveler who is often superficial, moved mainly by entertainment and recreation, taking photos, buying souvenirs, visiting famous sites, staying in one place for a brief time and not creating any kind of cultural relationship with the local population.

In 2002, the International Council for cultural and historical monuments published a formal definition as follows: "The cultural and cultural-cognitive tourism actually is this form of tourism, which focuses on the cultural environment, which in turn may include cultural and historical sights of a destination or cultural-historical heritage, values and lifestyle of the local population, arts, crafts, traditions and customs of the local population. Furthermore, cultural and cognitive routes may include a visit or participation in cultural activities and events, visit museums, concerts, exhibitions, galleries, etc" (ICOMOS 1999). Cultural tourism is the subset of tourism concerned with a country's culture, the history, their art, architecture, religion(s), and other elements that helped shape lifestyle of the people. Cultural tourism includes tourism in urban areas, particularly historic or large cities and their cultural facilities. It can also include tourism in rural areas showcasing the traditions of indigenous cultural communities, and their values and lifestyle, as well as niches like industrial tourism and creative tourism. It is generally agreed that cultural tourists spend substantially more than standard tourists do and play a part in regional development in different world regions.

Cultural tourism has been defined as "the movement of persons to cultural attractions away from their normal place of residence, with the intention to gather new information and experiences to satisfy their cultural needs" (Richards 2005: 24). These cultural needs can include the solidification of one's own cultural identity, by observing the 'other' (Timothy, Olsen 2006).

Religious tourism, also commonly referred to as faith tourism, is a type of tourism, where people travel individually or in groups for pilgrimage, missionary, or leisure purposes: to understand and appreciate their religion through a tangible experience, to feel secure about their religious beliefs.

In our case, as in many others, cultural and religious tourism are not separated: we recognise the material and immaterial cultural value of the human environment we visit, where spirituality helps us to find ourselves. Therefore, the religious/cultural tourist is moved by a religious, cultural or cognitive motivation, aware of the historic and artistic value and uniqueness of the monuments they encounter (not necessarily always visiting them), buying souvenirs, taking photos, visiting famous sites, staying for a brief time (Lavarini 1997: 608).

The religious and/or cultural tourist is also different from the pilgrim (Herbers, Santos Noia 1998: 91). Pilgrims, even if they wanted to, cannot buy souvenirs because it would add useless weight to their backpacks; in contrast to the religious tourist, they move on foot, without haste, and the walk allows them to instill a relationship with the surroundings, to observe nature and to enter into a rapport with those living along the trail⁸ (Costa 1990).

Even though it is the continuation of a tradition dating back to the Middle Ages (Urresti 2005: 239), today the conveniences necessary for tourists mean that a 'pilgrimage' is much less trying for everyone now than it used to be. A diversified range of tourism offerings is made available to the 'pilgrims' based on their economic possibilities and ages: different types of hospitality structures, refuges, hotels, campgrounds, private homes; facilitated services offered by commercial businesses and restaurants; public transport for quick transfers; construction projects for new refuges and multiple services promoting cultural heritage⁹. The increase in travel opportunities for more people has meant that the areas affected by tourism are subject to a counter-reaction, and consequent radical changes at two levels: material and immaterial (Fig. 3). This fact is articulated through a physical expression of elements (for instance, roads, abandonment of architecture in disrepair and the fading away of popular traditions and rituals that are not especially appealing or spectacular).

There is another contradiction evident in the areas along the Camino, and more in general in areas involved in tourism. Many 'modern tourists' do not want to be identified as such, because of the conviction that the more tourism that exists in an area, the less 'paradise-like' the place will be. This new typical value attracts another segment of tourists: those who are looking for an uncontaminated environment, where they can experience an authentic connection with the place. This results in an expansion of mass tourism; the push for a continuous search for intact environments generates a type of tourism that consumes inexorably, making the newly exploited territories seem uniform and undervalued.

Thoughts along the Camino: the experience

The few days of experience that made us 'special' observers of the widely acknowledged risk of material and immaterial consumption of the heritage of the Camino, in turn also made us consumers of this same heritage. We took advantage of the 'conveniences' made available to tourists, only marginally experiencing the significance of the Camino, dedi-



FIG. 3. Progressive consumption.

cating ourselves, sometimes with a detached or *super partes* attitude, to research on the problem for which we were called upon to find causes and (hypothetically) solutions.

We can start from a specific date: on 23 October 1987 the European Council recognised the importance of religious and cultural itineraries, to which the town of Santiago in Galicia was added¹⁰. The purpose of this declaration was to protect the Camino, not only from an artistic and cultural standpoint but, regard to nature, the ancient roads, knowledge, the meeting points between diverse cultures, internationalisation. It shows clearly how the value recognised by the European Council is not limited to the actual place but is extended to the visitation of the area by a diverse population and implemented through the continuous and repetitive flow of these visitors¹¹. It encompassed the idea that pilgrims, crossing through northern Spain for days, were not only acting based on their faith, travelling to the tomb of their saint, but they had also assumed the role of cultural mediators, observing the local landscape, places and people, recording information to establish a tight chain of information 'from town to town' (Caucci von Saucken 1993: 108).

The substantial difference in this council declaration, in respect to recognition exclusively of a devotional and religious nature in the history of the Camino, lies in the fact that many official and political bodies, expressly kept separate from the organisation of the pilgrimage, have become part of the relaunching of this new European heritage.

The political decisions stemmed from studies in the social sector that initially analysed diverse sociological aspects of the phenomenon around the Camino de Santiago. Based on the uniqueness of the place and the opportunity provided by the declaration of the European Council, local and international administrations have cultivated a growing interest in these kinds of sites from a cultural, tourism, economic, and image standpoint.

I believe that in order to better understand the consequences of the decisions made after this European declaration, several aspects should be examined in depth, specifically the meaning of the term 'heritage', often repeated in the official document. This English term, co-opted from the French language¹², identifies the material and immaterial re-

sources of the cultural heritage, and corresponds with moving beyond a traditional view of cultural heritage and a conservative strategy based solely on protection. This change is evident in various regulatory transformations at a national and international level.

Reading of the main documents of UNESCO¹³, (which at world level deals with the protection, conservation and promotion of cultural heritage), we can see an evolution of the idea of heritage. Initially, this thought started from the concept of heritage linked to monumental heritage, architectural sites. Now the interest is oriented towards testimonies that have gradually been recognised as being of extraordinary importance because they are an expression of the culture of a territory and/or a people.

Cultural heritage is a condensed cultural, material and immaterial inheritance of a territorial and community context, expressing uniqueness, peculiarity and potential. Heritage, to be identified by this term, must bring values within itself.

But these values change over time and space, through the mutations made by humans that implement various methods for protecting it. In particular, the forms of conservation and protection have been accompanied by policies of enhancement in which the use, is a fundamental and necessary element for the continuity and protection of the heritage.

The transition from promotion to tourism is quite brief. Heritage tourism introduced new aspects into the debate on the conservation of material and immaterial cultural heritage. The first necessary step to better comprehend the problem in question is to understand if the term 'heritage tourism' identifies the cultural objects that are part of the tourist offer (Garrod, Fyall 2001), or the behavior of the tourists with regard to the heritage¹⁴ (Butler, Airey 2003). The characteristic element of this new type of tourism linked to culture is the bond between the cultural experience and the subjective feeling, or the correspondence between individual motivation and the perception of the site. The policies of valorisation of the patrimony have been oriented to the production of a variety of cultural products, generating a sort of mass costume, for which the cultural object becomes a status symbol and its use a 'ritual'.

If on the one hand, cultural tourism is responding to an experiential need for authenticity, proposing new clusters and creative ideas for the development of territories and amplification of the emotional reactions guaranteed by multi-sensorial experiences, on the other hand protection of heritage seems to be totally unprepared to handle the new meanings being associated with it. The new contents underlying the term heritage foresee the evolution of the concept of conservation, which, if not shared, generates doubts and perplexities in asset management. Or rather, the concept of conservation as a government of change is not understood.

The less-than-total clarity of the co-evolutionary logic of conservation (Della Torre 2010) sees us unprepared in the face of the rapid anthropisation of heritage. The dualism of 'knowing to conserve' risks becoming a negative factor.

Another concept that has been long misunderstood is that of conservation itself. Beyond any conflicts in definition, conservation means governance of the transformation rather than negation of development (Della Torre 2011).

The Italian law¹⁵ (Germanà 2014) offers guidelines on the ways and methods for its conservation and enhancement, to be applied to the aspects, organisational and procedural (identifying operators, skills and responsibilities for each stage of the process of enhancement), taking full advantage of the possibilities offered by globalisation. In

other words, it is an opportunity to identify strategies, new heterogeneous stakeholders, and starting from programming, to implement cultural heritage policies that are not based on the idea of an immediate economic return guaranteed by high numbers of visitors, but instead starting to invest in research, also from an organisational, technological and management perspective. In fact, heritage does not constitute a commercial production line, and it is therefore important to manage it and promote it based on its extraordinary resources and not fall into the trap of transforming it solely into a generator of profit.

Comparing experiences: is Miami here too?

The words that Gian Paolo Treccani wrote in 1986 in the article “Sirmione is not Miami” (Treccani 1986), are a metaphor that I think shows how a local reality that brings with it material and immaterial values can change under the pressure of tourism. This is not an example of an explicitly religious character, like the Camino de Santiago, but directly shares, with that example, the concept of physical consumption of the existing natural heritage, artificial and created by humans, material and immaterial.

The danger of erosion, which can also be compared to what is happening in the Camino de Santiago, is not limited to a specifically contained portion of the territory (the city of Sirmione), but instead to a wide range involving the entire perimeter of Lake Garda and nearby routes. Sirmione is the emblem of the reality in the lake region and synthesizes the heterogeneous development arising from the several generations of tourists coming from all over the world to this area.

In both examples there are particular and sensitive motivations behind the decisions to travel to the chosen destination (religious and/or touristic needs).

In the Sirmione case, the original interest was linked to the favorable geographic, strategic and environmental situation, as well as its health benefits (thermal spas, but more generally, the climate).

In order to meet the need to stay at the lake, we have witnessed the construction of structures for hospitality, alongside an indigenous architecture without the dominance of the first. During the early 1900s, the management of the architectural heritage, and more in general the landscape of Garda, consciously catered at the same time for the needs of local populations and tourists in a balanced way. The possibility of reaching Lake Garda was the privilege of a few people, who enjoyed the welcome of the local people without prevarication similarly to the first pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago.

In more recent years the decisions to transform and conserve the heritage and landscape have been exclusively directed towards economic ends. Local entrepreneurs provide tourists with a surrogate trip that corresponds to an idea that the tourist has created and desires. The aggravating factor in this territorial context is the fact that tourism is considered cultural and sustainable because the historical surroundings provide a backdrop that is suggestive of celebrations, events and entertainment of all kinds. So much so that when the historical material is not available in its original form, it is invented *tout court* (like the Gardaland amusement park, to just name one meaningful example) (Fig. 4).

Recently, some experiences aimed at re-evaluating the primarily cultural and sustainable aspects of tourism in the Lake Garda area seem to point to a strategy based on in-



FIGS. 4a-4b. Merlino's Castle in Gardaland Park, 20th century (by <<http://www.gardalandtribe.com/wp/index.php/il-castello-di-mago-merlino/>> accessed 2 May 2019); Sirmione Castle, 13th century.

verting this trend, maintaining a link with tourism without being necessarily subjected to it. Effective collaboration among cultural, social and economic institutions, seems to have initiated a virtuous process in which tourism, marketing, culture and heritage are combined to work in positive synergy. The University of Brescia was a scientific partner in this initiative, and played a very important role in guaranteeing the conservation of structures in the territory (Scala 2016). The Cittadella di Lonato (in the Brescia Province) is a group of buildings from the 1400s, partially purchased in the early 1900s by Knight Ugo of Como to promote a wide-ranging educational project in the vast library, creating a collection from the Veneto Podestà, which became the driving force for cultural values in the area.

Nearly a century later, the Foundation that managed the heritage left by its founder is trying to relaunch the ambitious hospitality project, proposing the realisation of a hotel. The project is based on acknowledgment of the vocation of the centre as a cultural site, with hospitality inside the areas of the Citadel used as part of an experiential type of tourism. This kind of hospitality does not only represent simple entertainment, but instead actively involves the tourist with regard to the possibility of creating relationships, enrichment, building knowledge, experiencing emotions and sharing values, such as the authenticity of the host people and places, and with the active participation of the local communities that safeguard the heritage (ICOMOS 1999: Principle 4).

While not identifying a specific operating strategy to contain the risks stemming from intense use, there are certain aspects to keep under consideration in the case of the Camino de Santiago, as well as in other areas where the heritage becomes part of the promotion of the territory. These involve a range of players: those managing the areas (who must be aware of the value they are governing), supported by appropriate legislation, the inhabitants, who are responsible for the direct roles they play in the territory, visitors, made aware of the unique nature of the experience that they are able to enjoy¹⁶. These highlight the need to fully investigate interaction among the various human, economic and historical aspects, to defend heritage sites as part of a conscious promotional strategy that is suitable for transmitting the values expressed by a territory, defending them from precocious and undesired consumption, resulting in losses of inestimable value.

Notes

¹ Extract from a book by Pier Paolo Pasolini, *L'odore dell'India*, Milano 1962. Translation by the author.

² When I shared some photographs during the workshop, in particular the comment was: "Are you on the Camino? I went by motorcycle years ago".

³ "As for the roads, or more precisely the trails and tracks, pilgrims and merchants in the Middle Ages were much more attentive to recording their expenditures and stops than they were in noting the urban dimension and landscapes they encountered. For different reasons and different points of attraction, they both seem to pass through with their eyes blindfolded, consumed in their devotional books and accounts" (Brilli 2006: 18; translation by the author). Not taking advantage of cultural assets is therefore due to scarcity of time, desire, knowledge, but above all, in the less known towns along the Camino, to the absence of an effective strategy to make the most of these assets.

⁴ A desire for spirituality arises from the need to place oneself in less involving positions freer from the conditioning of materialism and its forms, to overturn the point of observation, to learn not to be slaves to form. Feeling lighter, less weighed down by the useless burdens of exasperated consumerism, rediscovering a clearer horizon, where it is still possible to reread with attention the driving force of an immensely perfect creation, capable of accepting even the finest curiosity, the most Hamletic doubt, the most rebellious idea. It is on this road that harmony calls man to show him what really counts in his race against time. Giving voice to the spirit is like to recall in life the life, the true life, the life that leads to noble horizons, where what really matters is your desire to be more flexible, generous, more attentive to the problems of others. It is on the path of a rediscovered spirituality that human history is renewed, that resumes again to live and to hope, without the frustrating assault of a material well-being without outlets, made of impulses that nerve the desire to believe, to do, to be surprised by a human nature much richer and more versatile than we imagine.

⁵ <<http://www.ambrosiana.eu/cms/content/3349-20150815-primi-e-ultimi-tra-manoscritti-e-stampati-della-biblioteca-ambrosiana---vii---raccontare-il-cammino-di-santiago-di-comp.html>> [Accessed 5 January 2018].

⁶ <<http://www.internetica.it/atto-europeistico82.htm>> [Accessed 5 January 2018].

⁷ These people generally spend a week walking one section of the trail, then come back the following year to tackle the second part.

⁸ The expression 'religious tourism' is a cultural construct of the Catholic Church that is used to

convert the tourist into a religious person, but not necessarily into a religious pilgrim. Pilgrims seek the meaning of life, not living a life of luxury; they are not connected to any social status, they do not take advantage of the local population, and do not buy souvenirs.

⁹ The idea of tourism melds the ideas of travel and a resort, and therefore evokes expectations of rest, recreation, entertainment (expectations that continue to be more and more customised to each person's habits, likes and dislikes, and strategies for distinguishing themselves at a social level).

¹⁰ <<https://www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes/the-santiago-de-compostela-pilgrim-routes>> [Accessed 5 January 2018].

¹¹ Many pilgrims, following an ancient tradition, in certain points of their walk collect a stone from one of the many piles scattered along the trails of the Camino, to then deposit in farther on, often after having carried it for many days. Some people, when they leave their own stone, collect another from the pile to then deposit it again later, whenever they feel the right moment has come to leave it. The walk towards Santiago de Compostela is full of this kind of symbolism. The rite of the stone is just one of the uninterrupted chains of gestures, and it constitutes a powerful element of cultural identity and profound spiritual continuity for all of the pilgrims who have traveled these roads over time.

¹² "Bien(s) acquis ou transmis par voie de succession; Ce qu'on tient de prédécesseurs, de générations antérieures, sur le plan du caractère, de l'idéologie, etc; Ce qui est laissé par les prédécesseurs et qui est pénible à assumer"; see <www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/h%C3%A9ritage/39675?q=h%C3%A9ritage#39597> [Accessed 5 January 2018].

¹³ <<https://whc.unesco.org/>> [Accessed 5 January 2018]. The term 'cultural heritage' appears for the first time in a UNESCO text in the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (UNESCO 1972).

¹⁴ "the purposeful cultural tourist; the sightseeing cultural tourist; the casual cultural tourist; the incidental cultural tourism; the serendipitous cultural tourism" (McKercher 2002).

¹⁵ D.Lgs. 42/2004, art. 6, rev./2008.

¹⁶ To contain the aggressive side of tourism, some simple practices are useful, including: preventing concentrations in single areas; promoting alternative itineraries and hours; building responsibility in local communities; activating policies and incentives for residents (taxes, planning, protection of traditional businesses, inventories and protection, dedicated special events, etc.); promotion of specif-

ic and diverse tourism experiences; promotion of a virtuous process (reinvesting profits from tourism in conservation / local residents).

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