Chapter 7
The St. James Way in Portugal and Spain: Development, Characteristics, Perspectives, and Experiences

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ABSTRACT
Using case studies, this chapter reviews the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) to governance for pilgrimage routes in the Via de la Plata and the Portuguese Way to Santiago (CPIS). The research is based on a set of qualitative techniques, including discussion groups, in-depth interviews, participant observation, team ethnography, and web analysis. This creates a rich and complex material for a deeper understanding of the route a stakeholder experiences. Stakeholders converge or differ in their perceptions of the actual problems of the route, while it is clearly shown how touristic principles or interests clash with other discourses focusing on integrity of historical accuracy or integrity of Xacobean values.

INTRODUCTION
The St. James Way, the first cultural route declared by the Council of Europe, is highly consolidated, expansive, and inspirational. It was patented in the 9th International Colloquium Compostela titled The Way of St. James as Model: Transformation, Inspiration and Imitation (Santiago de Compostela, 2014). This congress credited the St. James Way for the successful emergence of other well-known routes, including Italy’s Via Francigena, Japan’s Shikoku Henro, and Norway’s St. Olav Ways. Other modest examples are also found in Australia, the United States, and Brazil.

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The St. James Way is the most studied and mediated cultural route, which allows for a deeper analysis and understanding of its socioeconomic impacts and dynamics. As a major social phenomenon, the route creates tourist flows, which reconfigures the landscape and heritage of rural inland regions. As a dynamic and expanding phenomenon, it develops towns and villages located long distances from tourist circuits. Its symbolic power as an appellative has been used to promote the mark of Santiago de Compostela and Galicia.

This chapter analyzes the evolution and future of the St. James Way as a pilgrimage route and mode of tourism and development in Spain and Portugal. Through direct research funded by Cultour+ project (an Erasmus+ strategic partnership in the Higher Education sector) and the Government of Extremadura, this chapter analyzes the abundant bibliographies and press releases generated by the route.

The Cultour+ framework has served Delphi groups, in-depth interviews, participant observations, Web analysis, and the joining of rich and complex materials (more than 50 interviews, 100 questionnaires, collaborative working groups, and expert conferences). The group registered scopes and opinion upon discovering relevant route stakeholders. It studies the creation of new routes, as well as the connection of additional points in a web of roads and places.

Problems posed by the routes and case studies are transferable to other cultural routes, especially to those based on walking or cycling like St. Olaf’s Ways or Via Francigena. Fundamental elements in pilgrimage routes are analyzed. These include distances between stages, the quality of the starting or ending points of the stage, the bifurcation of roads with new alternatives, the birth of new routes, the evolution in the number of pilgrims, and the evolution of starting points.

A relevant data source are statistics from the Pilgrim’s Office. In the following pages, they are critically contrasted and expanded upon using indicators and estimates. In doing so, it is possible to identify profiles of pilgrims and tourists. Statistics on the routes weigh the socioeconomic impacts and ramifications of new routes and the influence of Xacobean years. Statistics also show the key starting points and distances that pilgrims use to walk to get to Santiago, something clearly related with the minimum of kilometers established by the Cabildo of Santiago to get the Compostela -the ecclesiastical certification of the pilgrimage.

In addition, positions and perspectives on various public and private stakeholders of the route can be analyzed. According to case studies, the following discussion groups provided in-depth interviews: hospitaleros and hostel managers; pilgrims; representatives of the administration responsible for the area of tourism and heritage; associations of road workers; and local action groups.

In summary, this chapter aims to diagnose pilgrimage routes to Santiago, based on contrasted case studies using the SWOT methodology including the stakeholder point of view. This identifies the route’s graphical key points, stakeholder concerns, and features to attract consensus.

This chapter is structured in 5 sections. In the introduction the subject is contextualized and the objective of the research is fixed. In section 2, follows a characterization of the St James Ways, their stakeholders and stakeholders’ interactions. In this section, an original relevant contribution to the debate of pilgrims vs. tourists is done. In section 3, a methodological approach to swot analysis is developed. In section 4, the results of the Swot Analysis are presented. In section 5, conclusions and recommendations are stated for St. James Ways, highlighting the roles of statistics and the future evolution of St James Ways.
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