

STEP BY STEP: MARKING THE WAY

VAUGHAN L.

RMIT University, MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

The saying goes, that if we ignore the past we will be destined to repeat it. Such a perspective implies that the actions or structures of the past are redundant to modern life and that we should only look back in order to address the mistakes of the past and thereby design a better future. In some ways this is the premise of this paper and the research that it reports on; however rather than assuming that we look back so that we can discard the past in order to move forward, it also proposes that the practices of the past can add to or enable us, to have a greater understanding of the present and the future.

In 2009 I took a walk, a long walk. I walked 200kms in 8 days and this walk was the central focus of a project known as '*laurene roaming*'. This walk wasn't just any old walk; it was a pilgrimage. The intention of this walk was to explore the relationship between walking, pilgrimage, ancient place-making methods and new technologies. The location for the pilgrimage was 'The Way of Saint James' also known as the Camino de Santiago. This is a pre-medieval pilgrim path that has been trodden by millions of others, in the hope of salvation, as a method of punishment, as employment, and as a form of low cost tourism. Tourism, travel documentation and planning have been an important framework and context for this investigation.

The discussion of this paper will focus on the navigational models and tools used to guide people on this journey to north west Spain, and to contemplate them as mapping methods that act to reveal 'the way' for the pilgrim as they make their journey, as much as to show or tell them about where they are. As such the link between traditional methods of way-marking, as means to enable way-finding and way-showing will be considered as central constructs in the experience of place for a transient inhabitant (a tourist or pilgrim).

POSITIONING THE CAMINO DE SANTIAGO & THE PRACTICES OF PILGRIMAGE

The Camino de Santiago is an ancient pilgrims path that stretches back to medieval times. In total there are twelve different paths that clustered under this title, but typically it is the Camino Frances that is being referred to in the literature. This path is 800kms long, it starts in St Jean/Roncesvalles and ends in Santiago de Compostela. Throughout history millions of people have made their way along its paths. The reasons for their walks vary, from being religious, to opportunistic or leisure (Davies & Cole 2003). Although once a selectively Catholic thing to do, contemporary pilgrims come from all sorts of religious or spiritual traditions. There are many mythologies surrounding the Camino and thousands of publications have been written. From religious texts, cultural analysis, accounts and critiques of the Cathedral at the centre of the journey, and personal accounts of travel, tourism and transformation. The numbers of people walking the Camino has varied over the centuries, informed by war, religion, social change and fashion. By the late 1700s the numbers walking the Camino had diminished significantly, however since the 1950s numbers started to swell again. Since then there have been numerous years when approximately 150,000 people have trodden the various paths of the Camino. This increase has both brought the Camino de Santiago back to life, and placed significant strain on local infrastructure. In 1993 the Camino was named as a UNESCO World Heritage site (Sanders 2007).

After years of having read and considered the possibilities of pilgrimage and such extensive walking practices, I was drawn to undertake a section of the Camino in 2009. I elected to start where most people end, and to walk in a circle rather than a straight line. Mine was the Camino Finisterre. I commenced my walk in the city of Santiago, setting out from the Cathedral at 7am one late summer morning, and for eight days walked a loop that took me to the end of the world, Finisterre, then northward tracing the coastline of the Atlantic Ocean to Muxia and then back again, returning to the Cathedral, the place where I had begun. I deliberately chose to walk this loop, to walk this section. I had limited time in which I could walk, 200-kms is required to say that you have done the Camino, and I was fascinated by the history of Galicia, it became the location of my pilgrimage and the locale for the context of this discussion.

Like many situations in the natural and constructed world, there is much that we can learn about the everyday by looking at the extreme. In this case I am considering travel and tourism through the more extreme actions of pilgrimage. It is generally understood within the literature that it is from the ancient practices of pilgrimage that contemporary travel and tourism guides emerged (Tate & Turville-Petre 1995). That the Pilgrim's Codex was the founding travel guide where one pilgrim shared with others their experiences of walking the Camino, and thereby started the transition from what was once an oral and

communal tradition, experienced through connection to others, to becoming one that is once removed and communicated through published texts. The ways of the pilgrim are both individual and connected, they are unique and deeply codified. There are the paths to be walked; places to be visited, things collected, shown, worn and an equal number of things are to be left behind (ibid). The purpose of pilgrimage is to make life more meaningful. The essence of the sacred way is 'tracing a sacred route of rests and trials, ordeals and obstacles, to arrive in a holy place and attempt to fathom the secrets of its power' (Cousineau 1998, p. 96). It is for this reason I believe that there is much that we can learn when contemplating new developments in travel and tourism infrastructure and in particular travel guides and mapping devices by looking back to this quite extreme form of travel from medieval times forward.

APPROACH AND METHODS

The methodology for this investigation was one of embodied knowing. An exploration into the phenomenology of lived cartographies, of human and cultural geography in practice rather than theory. I had for years engaged in research into the nature of pilgrimage as a place-making activity through secondary data, through the historical and theoretical literature and through personal accounts. Through these texts I had a sense of what was being talked about, but not a knowing, and this was an important difference that I felt must be overcome if this study was to extend into some new insights that I could then apply to future research investigations (Image 1).



Image 1

Kineasthetic engagement and the experience of the body as it transits through space were fundamental to the design of this project. It was the means for knowing beyond intellectual critique. Consciousness and cognitive activity are more than an act of the mind (Greenfield 1995), because engagement with the world and with knowledge can take many forms. This is not a foreign concept in the disciplines of geography and discourses on place-making; they are consistent with the actions of Human and Cultural Geography and the methods of Psycho geographic investigations where walking and local narratives are used to map and know place (Bassett 2004, Coverley 2006).

Typically deep mapping methods such as those used by Tim Robinson give us an insight into a place through the social, cultural and topographical features of that place. Robinson's deep mapping explorations of place, most notably his publication 'The Stones of Aran' a long term cultural mapping of the islands of north west Ireland (Wall 2008) provides us with an extraordinary account of this place; his maps of the territory and its inhabitants emerge after years of engagement, and close readings through conversations with the people and not just an arrangement of geology and local town infrastructure. In deep mapping explorations the whole body and all of our perceptual abilities are essential to the process and the outcomes. As Merleau-Ponty states, 'Perception becomes an 'interpretation' of the signs that our senses provide in accordance with the bodily stimuli, a 'hypothesis' that the mind evolves to explain its impressions to itself' (Merleau-Ponty 1967, p. 39). This is a sentiment endorsed by Edie (1964) 'For we call what we perceive, 'the world'' (p. 26) and it is this world that we then articulate and relate to as we move through it and as we place ourselves within it. In this case walking the pilgrimage in the midst of others was an important aspect. Not only was I deeply embedded in the everyday actions of being a pilgrim, I also moved with the others, transitioned from place to place, by foot on the ground in the traditions of this way. In this way, each step added to know my kinaesthetic knowing of this path and the numerous places along it. This is an approach supported by Lippard, who states that '(m)otion allows a certain mental freedom that translates a place to a person kinaesthetically (1997, p. 17).

From a humanist geography perspective the focus is not on the place itself but on the human experience of that place (Porteous 1985). To help make sense of this relationship Porteous developed the following framework Fig. 1 (p.119). Although his interest is in the representation of place through literature I believe that we can transition this to a broader understanding of cultural landscapes.

	Inside	Outside
Home	Sense of place	Entrapment
Away	The traveller	Journey, exile & yearning (often urban)

Figure 1

This conception of the relationship between individual and place is interesting in the context of a pilgrimage, as there are the many landscapes under consideration. There are those of the internal world, the world of the self and the transformation that is experienced and sought through a pilgrimage, and then there is the outside world of the landscape that is walked. The pilgrim is always traversing a landscape that is outside and away. That is the core objective of the journey to leave one's home in order to find salvation one must always be somewhere other than home, and yet the emotional the landscape that is formed through this cultural activity enables the pilgrim walker to become deeply connected to the passing local culture and belief systems. This process is supported by the close connection that the pilgrim's method of travel, walking, enables as it adjusts our perception of place and our position in relation to it.

In practical terms this was realised through my walking. For each of the days of the exploration I lived and slept the ways of the Camino: walking, sleeping in refuges and carrying my needs on my back. As I did this I moved between analogue and digital recording methods. I kept a paper journal, I took photos and uploaded these plus some observations to a blog via my I-phone and plotted my path on a Google map. Prior to heading off on this journey I established an integrated blog site. Although there are an increasing number for travel applications available these tend to function as recording environments, I wanted one

that would offer me more flexibility to record, collate, reflect and disseminate. On returning home I then returned to this data and to the literature with the aim of gaining greater insights from this experience for application to future research and projects.

DISCUSSION:FINDING AND SHOWING THE WAY

The markers



Image 2

As I have said earlier in this piece up until the writing of the Pilgrim's Codex, the navigational methods of Camino were essentially oral and communal with the way of the path being conveyed by other walkers or local people that were encountered along the way. Overtime a standardised form of way-marking emerged. In Spain the contemporary markers take two forms these are yellow arrows hand painted on trees, walls, or the ground, or concrete milestones bearing the blue and yellow stylised Council of Europe ceramic star, whose rays normally indicate the direction to be taken (Image 2). The shape of the star is similar to the scallop shell that is also the sign of the pilgrim. On the path from Santiago to Finisterre, the markers may also include a reference to the distance to the lighthouse on the point at Finisterre. These markers are the key for the contemporary pilgrim, they link the present and the past, and are the most trusted form of navigation even with the multitude of forms are used in the present day. Some guidebooks claim that it is not necessary to use a map, as these markers are all that you need, but not all pilgrims feel so sure.

The placement of the markers varies along the journey but they typically appear about once every fifty meters. A fellow pilgrim who I met along the way assured me at a time when I was convinced that we were lost, that I should not worry. I should continue to walk for 20-minutes and if I do not encounter a marker by then, I should retrace my steps and then start again. From his 700km experience this was the rhythm of placement that he had learnt to trust.

NARRATIVES OF PLACE

The purpose of pilgrimage is to make life more meaningful. The essence of the sacred way is 'tracing a sacred route of rests and trials, ordeals and obstacles, to arrive in holy place and attempt to fathom the

secrets of its power' (Costineau p.96). This has important implications for our expectation for walking a pilgrimage path. It is an act that is undertaken alone and one that is undertaken in community with others past and present.

One of the main aims of walking a pilgrimage is for the walker to be able to connect deeply with themselves and to a greater being by transitioning through place towards an ultimate destination. Whether the walk is penitentiary, religious or a personal challenge, there is this constant exchange between self, the other and place, all of which is realised through the path that is walked. The role of the way-markers on this walk is to enable the walker to be both completely present to where they are at this moment whilst also focusing on their destination. The pilgrim trusts that the markers will lead them on their way, that the markers will be there and that they will be correct. This is a challenging method of navigation and truly is one of way-finding and the idea of the 'way' as in the name of the pilgrimage being 'the way of Saint James' takes on greater significance. By placing such a profound belief in the accuracy of the way-markers, guidebooks and maps become supplementary navigation devices. They show other 'ways'; they tell narratives of experience and position the walk in a context broader than the narrow physical path that is being walked.

This has very interesting implications for what we can learn about way-finding tools and devices. So many of these devices either tell us what to do, or they record what we have done. For example 'turn right here, take the next exit or 5kms to the next thing'. They are literal records and guides, but the way-markers such as those used in this kind of environment lead the walker. The only information that they convey is directional. They tell us nothing about where we are, nor where we are going, only that, if we are on this path, then we should go 'that' way. There is a similarity between these and the marks or clues of a treasure hunt or orienteering route in that they guide us, but these are not hidden and they are not playful. They are similar to sign posts that guide us on a freeway telling us where to drive, what lane or exit to take, but unlike these they do not tell us where we are, and only a few tell us how far we are from the end. It is an ambiguous form of way-showing, and it is the ambiguity that creates community.

The arrows of the Camino are for everyone, and yet they are only for those who are partaking. The path itself traverses along city and town roads, on the edge of highways, through hamlets and across forestland, as such at times it is solitary and unto itself, at others it is embedded in the day to day life of the city. You may live in one of the areas touched by the Camino and know the significance of the arrows, but if you are not on a pilgrimage they are just part of the localised landscape. However if you do not know their context, you will not know their meaning and you may be left wandering and wondering why there are so many of them dotted around the place (some even feature on people's T-shirts and other local paraphernalia). The nature of the Camino is 'that the pilgrim's journey is always a shared undertaking; he or she is guided, encouraged and aided by a network of 'dedicated others', living and dead, and the sustained experience and conscious awareness of being so supported is profoundly educative. There is also the meaningful sense of commonality that develops among people who meet by chance as pilgrims on the Camino'

(<http://www.csj.org.uk/spirit.htm>). The markers of the Camino are an integral part of the non-human network.

This commonality is essential to understanding the heritage of a pilgrimage and the ways in which way-finding occurs. There is the history of the markers and their placement, although they are not static that have moved overtime as the broader landscape of the Camino has also shifted. For the Camino does not exist in isolation, it is a path, a cultural intervention that exists within broader culture contexts. The large numbers of people engaged in the walk is another dimension of this, the wear and tear, the marks on the ground and the paths worn in fields are all part of the place-making and way-finding devices used as one walks this path.

IMPLICATIONS

As Akerman (2006) explains, 'Way-finding is popularly thought to be among the primary uses of a map... But as late as the nineteenth century, maps were used mostly for planning journeys in advance, not for guiding travellers on the road' (p.1). In this way the itinerary was the essential element, or as argued by Delano-Smith, '(t)he normal guide to way-finding' (p.45). As in today, this itinerary would include place names, distances, additional notes about costs, as well as lists of places to eat or stay. They were essentially written documents and could be as simple as a list of place names, placed in relationship to each other on a plain, which in itself became a kind of topographical map. These itineraries were connected to oral traditions that, had also been an essential part of way-finding practices. Typically people's travel navigation and planning happened by people carrying an itinerary, having conversations along the way and leaving their map at home (ibid).

In the contemporary world we have many ways to know a place before we depart on a journey. Many of us spend considerable time and funds, buying guidebooks, maps and other place-knowing devices to aide us in knowing the place that we are travelling to. These diverse navigational and mapping devices enable us to create a landscape or vista of the places we are travelling to. The map becomes the ground cover, the guidebook the means for populating it and together they create a picture of place that is yet to be encountered.

For some this is true of their encounter with the Camino, they travel laden with maps, GPS units and guidebooks. I met a man who had plotted the whole journey into a GPS device that he wore around his waste, from northern Belgium to Finisterre, every step of his 2000km journey was there for him to follow; and yet he didn't. Like me (who also carried a guidebook with maps and had a GPS device in my phone) he discarded such navigational devices to focus on finding the way on the road. For the walking of the Camino is a form of navigation. The individual is both navigating their way along the pilgrim route, it is their own personal journey and one that has been done by millions before them, it is a predetermined and personal route at the same time (Akerman p.3).

When so much of contemporary life is about efficiency and effectiveness, travel and the experience of the tourist operates at the two extremes. There are those that are time poor and want quick and efficient experiences of places, and others who are there to break away from the pressures of the everyday pace of home, and who take, or have, the time to be where they are and thereby disrupt normality of the everyday. Not all our path taking is in the name of efficiency (Millonig & Gartner) and the Camino is a heightened example of this.

In her discussion of how mobility informs the form of maps Delano-Smith highlights the importance of the relationship between time (how long the traveller has), distance and mode of travel in the creation of maps and associated travel items. For her these three elements are intricately connected and also informed by culture and history (2006, p. 29). In early travel guides there was an emphasis on writing these texts as a means to share with others about ones travel, to tell the tale of your experience (p.30). It included features such as where one stayed, what one did and what to look out for, what we might see as a hybrid between a guidebook and a travel journal. Such accounts rarely contained maps. At this time, maps were typically, if at all, looked at before departure but they were not taken with you, from the moment of your departure it was a process of 'ground truthing'; conversations with people in the places you past through were the key navigational device. These were the secular equivalents to the Pilgrim's Codex, from the 16th Century the travel guides that started to appear would also often discuss how to approach ones travel and were as much about the state of mind to adopt as they were about where to go. They were guides for how to 'be' whilst travelling rather than a guide for what to 'do'.

As you the reader will have come to realise by now, when speaking of a pilgrimage we typically refer to a 'way,' a 'path' or a 'route.' The term road is less prevalent in the literature. In an attempt to describe the features of traveller's paths Dalno-Smtih (2006, p. 43) defines a road is a physical feature, built into the landscape, which over time has become more and more refined. In contrast a route is more abstract, like a path or a way through something or towards something, for example a route through a woodland. 'A route is not a road, nor in itself a physical feature, but a direction, an imaginary line linking a point of departure with a destination. Only its description gives it tangible form in speech or gesture, writing or image. A route may be the personal creation of an individual traveller or group of travellers or it may be official...' (p.38). This is important when thinking of such personal itineraries and allows for the abstract connection between the internal and external experiences of the pilgrim. If we return to Porteous's quadrant of relationships between the internal and the external and concepts of away and at home, we can see that it is possible for the individual to carve out their own personal itinerary shifting their experience of the route that they walk and their understanding of themselves and the community that they are a part of both home and away.

CONCLUSION: KNOWING PLACE THROUGH FRAGMENTS AND TRACES

'Pilgrimage is premised on the idea that the sacred is not entirely immaterial, but that there is a geography of spiritual power' (Solnit 2000, p. 50). There is an expectation and a belief about the location or the site of the pilgrimage. Usually these are places of magic, belief and history that have the power to transform lives. Yet beyond the destination of the pilgrimage, there is also the process of the travel, the itinerary that is to be followed, and the stops to be made along the way. In this case the itinerary is revealed through the markers, and the markers position us in place.



Image

3



Image 4

What becomes apparent when we consider the way-showing methods of the Camino pilgrimage is that the itineraries of individuals in the present, and since its inception, have been ones of fragments and traces. Fragments in an overall journey revealed overtime through a sequence of markers where the whole vista goes unseen; and fragments and traces of personal experiences revealed in conversations and personal accounts (either in person or in text). These are close up methods of way-showing and way-finding that reveal on a human scale the nature of the place and over time the destination.

In the beginning I proposed that it is important to look back in order to find our way forward. As I walked the loop of the Finisterre Camino, I encountered the challenges of being with the flow of the majority as I walked forward to the west and even to the north (Muxia) but my return journey required me, and my companions to walk against the flow. Although others too walk this path, they are few and the markers that we had thought that we would encounter were few or not visible. We found ourselves seeking out other

kinds of traces, flattened grass or marks in the gravel on the ground (Image 3 & 4). We looked back in order to anticipate walking forward our view of our itinerary became ever smaller and more tenuous, and our focus closer as the path, the route revealed itself to us. Although I had carried with me for the entire trip a GPS and had access to Google Maps on my I-phone it was only at this point when our maps, the arrows and other road signs left my companions and I standing lost in the middle of a field, that we made use of the technology that we had with us. In some ways it felt like we were cheating, no longer trusting the integrity of tradition. If anything I felt a shift in my perception from having the sense of being one amongst many, to being an explorer in an unknown place.

The Camino with its ancient peculiarities is an extreme form of travel. What can be learnt from this? What can be taken forward to help us conceive of new way-marking methods for tourist or travellers contexts?

For me the key is in the shift from way-showing as an exposure of an entire landscape that can be seen in the lines of a map, where the entire vista of a place can be engaged with or even interpreted outside of experience, to one that emerges as we engage with it. Of course we always come to know place more deeply by being there, but the delight of travelling is often in the unexpected, in the unknown and in the break from certainty of the landscapes of home. Designing ways to fragment and reveal places at the human scale is for me the challenge and the potential. To bring us back to the basics of what it means to traverse landscape, to listen to stories, to make stories and to reveal these in the course of our experience of place.

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